

# Social Psychology

Although still young, this twenty-first century has dramatically reminded us that we are social animals whose lives and cultures revolve around how we think about, influence, and relate to one another.

On September 11, 2001, nineteen men on box cutters achieved an act of cataclysmic violence that triggered fright, outrage, and a lust for revenge. But it also triggered an outpouring of compassion and including gifts of more money, food, clothing, and teddy bears than New Yorkers could possibly use. What drives people to feel such hatred that they would destroy thousands of innocent lives? And what motivates heroic altruism of those who died trying to save others and of the many more who stepped out to those coping with loss?

Echoes of these questions resurfaced after genocide plagued the Darfur region of Sudan beginning in 2003, and during the war in Iraq, where survey-based estimates of deaths ranged from 151,000 to more than 1 million from 2002 through 2006 (Iraq Family Study, 2008; ORB, 2008). What factors affect the decision making of our world leaders? And how can we transform the bloodied fists of international conflict into the arms of peace and cooperation?

This century has also challenged Americans' preconceived notions about race, gender, and age. The unprecedented 2008 U.S. presidential contest involved a 60-year-old white woman (Hillary Clinton), a 46-year-

old African-American man (Barack Obama), and a 71-year-old White man (John McCain). Knowing that a difference of but a few votes could change the course of history, donors contributed hundreds of millions of dollars in the hope of influencing people's opinions. How do we form our attitudes, and how do those attitudes affect our actions?

As each day's news has brought updates on acts of hate or heroism, defeats or victories, many of us have lived out our own experiences with love and loss. Why are we attracted to some people but not others, and what spurs friendship and romance?

Human connections are powerful and can be perilous. Yet "we cannot live for ourselves alone," remarked the novelist Herman Melville. "Our lives are connected by a thousand invisible threads." **Social psychologists** explore these connections by scientifically studying how we think about, influence, and relate to one another.

## Social Thinking

OUR SOCIAL BEHAVIOR arises from our social cognition. Especially when the unexpected occurs, we analyze why people act as they do. Does her warmth reflect romantic interest, or is that how she relates to everyone? Does his absenteeism signify illness? Laziness? A stressful work atmosphere?

### SOCIAL THINKING

Attributing Behavior to  
Persons or to Situations  
Attitudes and Actions

**Close-Up:** Abu Ghraib  
Prison—An "Atrocity-  
Producing Situation"?

### SOCIAL INFLUENCE

Conformity and Obedience  
Group Influence  
Cultural Influence  
The Power of Individuals

### SOCIAL RELATIONS

Prejudice  
**Close-Up:** Automatic  
Prejudice  
Aggression  
**Close-Up:** Parallels Between  
Smoking Effects and Media  
Violence Effects  
Attraction  
**Close-Up:** Online  
Matchmaking and Speed  
Dating  
Altruism  
Conflict and Peacemaking

Recall from Unit 10 that personality psychologists study the enduring, inner determinants of behavior that help to explain why different people act differently in a given situation. Social psychologists study the social influences that help explain why the same person will act differently in different situations.

Social psychology is the scientific study of how we think about, influence, and relate to one another.

Oliner, S., & Oliner, P. (1988). *The altruistic personality: Rescuers of Jews in Nazi Europe*. New York: Macmillan.

Patterson, J., & Kim, P. (1991). *The day America told the truth*. New York: Prentice Hall.

## Key People

Solomon Asch  
Robert Cialdini  
John Darley  
Leon Festinger  
Irving Janis  
Bibb Latané  
Stanley Milgram  
Muzafer Sherif  
Philip Zimbardo

## Key Terms

social psychology

### Social Thinking

attribution theory  
fundamental attribution error  
attitude  
central route persuasion  
peripheral route persuasion  
foot-in-the-door phenomenon  
role  
cognitive dissonance theory

### Social Influence

conformity  
normative social influence  
informational social influence  
social facilitation  
social loafing  
deindividuation  
group polarization  
groupthink  
culture  
norm  
personal space

### Social Relations

prejudice  
stereotype  
discrimination  
ingroup  
outgroup  
ingroup bias  
scapegoat theory  
other-race effect  
just-world phenomenon  
aggression  
frustration-aggression principle  
mere-exposure effect  
passionate love  
companionate love  
equity  
self-disclosure  
altruism  
bystander effect  
social exchange theory  
reciprocity norm  
social-responsibility norm

Key Terms continued

## Pacing Guide

Use the following guide to determine how many instructional days to devote to this unit depending on the type of course you teach:

Year-long course: 8–10 days

Block schedule/Semester-long course: 5–7 days

This unit encompasses 8–10 percent of the AP Exam. Spending an appropriate amount of time on this unit will help students do well on the AP Exam.

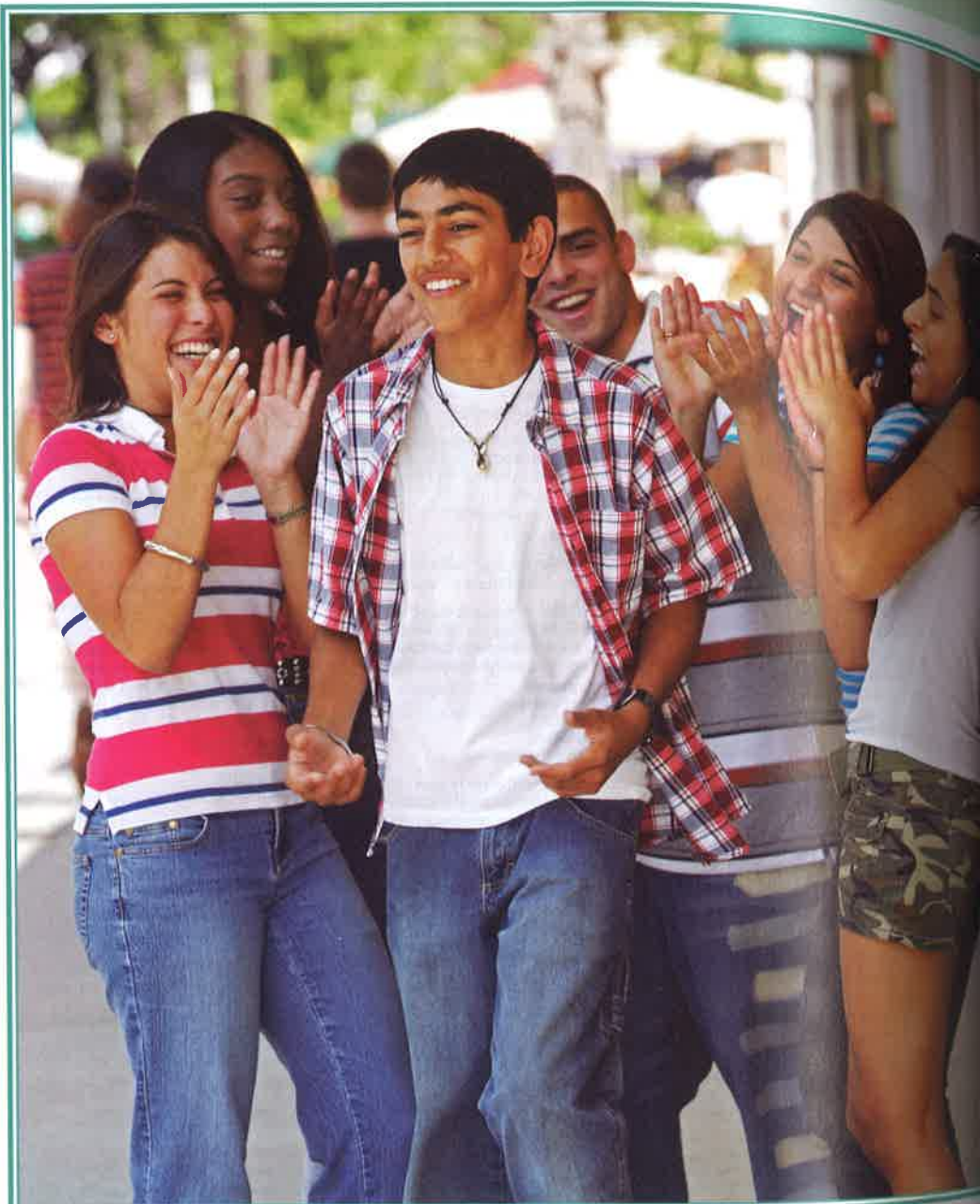


### TEACHING TIP

Students often underestimate the influence of others on their behavior. As teens search for their own individual identity, they may deny that peer pressure, conformity, and obedience dictate many of their choices and behaviors. Have students ponder the following questions:

- Why do you obey some rules and disobey others at your school?
- Have you ever been convinced by friends to do something you knew was wrong? To do something you knew was right?
- Do you consider yourself a conformist? Nonconformist? Why?

At this time, you may want to use **Introductory Exercise: Fact or Falsehood?** (p. 3) or **Lecture/Discussion Topic: Social Psychology's Most Important Lessons** (p. 3) from Bolt's Teacher's Resource Binder, which accompanies this text.



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## Suggested Readings

- Aronson, E. (2008). *The social animal* (10th ed.). New York: Worth Publishers.
- Cialdini, R. B. (1998). *Influence: The psychology of persuasion*. New York: William Morrow.
- Janis, I. L. (1982). *Groupthink*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.
- Lerner, M. (1980). *The belief in a just world*. New York: Plenum.
- Marsh, P. (Ed.). (1988). *Eye to eye: How people interact*. Topsfield, MA: Salem House Publishers.
- Milgram, S. (1974). *Obedience to authority*. New York: HarperCollins.

## INTERCONNECTING



Link discussion of attribution to explanatory style in positive psychology (Unit 12). We make certain attributions (or explanations) about our own behavior that are either situational or dispositional.

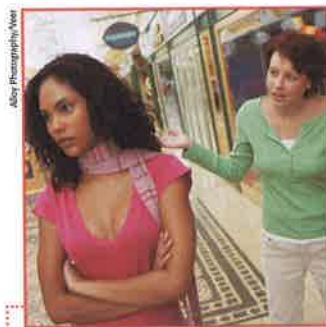
- Optimists are more likely to attribute good events to dispositions and bad events to situations.
- Pessimists, who are more likely to suffer depression, will make dispositional attributions for bad events and situational attributions for good events.

## CRITICAL THINKING



Have students consider the following questions to get them thinking about situational versus dispositional attribution:

- If a very good friend gets angry with you, how would you explain his or her behavior? If that same friend does something nice for you, how would you explain the behavior?
- If someone you have recently gotten to know walks by you in the hall but doesn't say hello (even as you try to say hello to them), what would you think about them? Why?
- Are your thoughts about your good friend's behavior different than your thoughts about someone you're only acquainted with? Why or why not?



**The fundamental attribution error** If our new friend acts grouchy, we may decide she's a grouchy person. She may be more likely to explain her behavior as a result of losing sleep over a family worry, missing the bus to school, or having a fight with her boyfriend.

**Actor and observer perspectives make for differing attributions** During their contentious U.S. presidential primaries in 2008, Barack Obama was criticized for seeming—in this camera perspective that faces him—to turn a cold shoulder to his opponent, Hillary Clinton. Obama later explained that he had greeted her earlier, and here was turning to speak to (as a picture shot from behind him might have shown) the unseen person to his left. In laboratory experiments, when a camera shows the actor's perspective, observers better appreciate the situation's influence.



Was the horror of 9/11 the work of crazed people, or of ordinary people corrupted by life events?

## Attributing Behavior to Persons or to Situations

### 1: How do we tend to explain others' behavior and our own?

After studying how people explain others' behavior, Fritz Heider (1958) proposed an **attribution theory**. Heider noted that people usually attribute others' behavior either to their internal dispositions or to their external situations. A teacher, for example, may wonder whether a student's hostility reflects an aggressive personality (a **dispositional attribution**) or a reaction to stress or abuse (a **situational attribution**).

In class, we notice that Juliette seldom talks; over coffee, Jack talks nonstop. Attributing their behaviors to their personal dispositions, we decide Juliette is shy and Jack is outgoing. Because people do have enduring personality traits, such attributions are sometimes valid. However, we often fall prey to the **fundamental attribution error**, by overestimating the influence of personality and underestimating the influence of situations. In class, Jack may be as quiet as Juliette. Catch Juliette as the lead in the high school musical and you may hardly recognize your quiet classmate.

An experiment by David Napollitan and George Goethals (1979) illustrated the phenomenon. They had Williams College students talk, one at a time, with a young woman who acted either aloof and critical or warm and friendly. Beforehand, they told half the students that the woman's behavior would be spontaneous. They told the other half the truth—that she had been instructed to act friendly (or unfriendly). What do you suppose was the effect of being told the truth?

There was no effect. The students disregarded the information. If the woman acted friendly, they inferred she really was a warm person. If she acted unfriendly, they inferred she really was a cold person. In other words, they attributed her behavior to her personal disposition *even when told that her behavior was situational*—that she was merely acting that way for the purposes of the experiment. Although the fundamental attribution error occurs in all cultures studied, this tendency to attribute behavior to people's dispositions runs especially strong in individualistic Western countries. In East Asian cultures, for example, people are more sensitive to the power of the situation (Masuda & Kitayama, 2004).

You have surely committed the fundamental attribution error. In judging whether your AP psychology teacher is shy or outgoing, you have perhaps by now inferred that he or she has an outgoing personality. But you know your teacher only from the classroom, a situation that demands outgoing behavior. Catch the teacher in a different situation and you might be surprised. Outside their assigned roles, teachers seem less teacherly, presidents less presidential, servants less servile.

Your teacher, on the other hand, observes his or her own behavior in many different situations—in the classroom, in meetings, at home—and so might say, "Me, outgoing? It all depends on the situation. In class or with good friends, yes, I'm outgoing. But at professional meetings I'm really rather shy." When explaining the behavior of those we know well and see in varied situations, we are sensitive to how behavior changes with the situation.

## TROUBLESHOOTING

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Social psychology is different from sociology. Social psychology considers how *individuals* interact with each other and society at large. Sociologists explore the behavior of *groups and cultures* as they interact internally and externally.

At this time, you may want to use **Lecture/Discussion Topic: Attribution and Models of Helping** (p. 6) or **Classroom Exercises: The Fundamental Attribution Error** (p. 4) or **Students' Perceptions of You** (p. 5) from Bolt's Teacher's Resource Binder.

son & Mischel, 2001). After behaving badly, we also recognize how the situation affected our own behavior (recall the *self-serving bias* discussed in Unit 10). What about our own intentional and admirable actions? Those we more often attribute to our own good reasons than to situational causes (Malle, 2006; Malle et al., 2007).

When explaining others' behavior, particularly the behavior of strangers we have observed in only one type of situation, we often commit the **fundamental attribution error**: We disregard the situation and leap to unwarranted conclusions about their personality traits. Many people initially assumed the 9/11 terrorists were obviously crazy, when actually they went unnoticed in their neighborhoods, health clubs, and favorite restaurants.

Researchers who have reversed the perspectives of actor and observer—by having each view a replay of the situation filmed from the other's perspective—have also reversed the attributions (Lassiter & Irvine, 1986; Storms, 1973). Seeing the world from the actor's perspective, the observers better appreciate the situation. (As you act, your eyes look outward; you see others' faces, not your own.) Taking the observer's point of view, the actors better appreciate their own personal style. Reflecting on our past selves of 5 or 10 years ago also switches our perspective. We now adopt an observer's perspective and attribute our behavior mostly to our traits (Pronin & Ross, 2006). Likewise, in another 5 or 10 years, our today's self may seem like another person.

### The Effects of Attribution

In everyday life we often struggle to explain others' actions. A jury must decide whether a shooting was malicious or in self-defense. An interviewer must judge whether the applicant's geniality is genuine. A person must decide whether to interpret another's friendliness as genuine, or motivated by self-interest (she just needs a ride). When we make such judgments, our attributions—either to the person or to the situation—have important consequences (Fincham & Bradbury, 1993; Fletcher et al., 1990). Happily married couples attribute a spouse's tart-tongued remark to a temporary situation ("She must have had a bad day at work"). Unhappily married couples attribute the same remark to a mean disposition ("Why did I marry such a hostile person?").

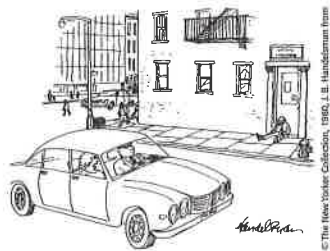
Or consider the political effects of attribution. How do you explain poverty or unemployment? Researchers in Britain, India, Australia, and the United States (Furnham, 1982; Pandey et al., 1982; Wagstaff, 1982; Zucker & Weiner, 1993) report that political conservatives tend to attribute such social problems to the personal dispositions of the poor and unemployed themselves: "People generally get what they deserve. Those who don't work are often freeloaders. Anybody who takes the initiative can still get ahead." "Society is not to blame for crime, criminals are," said one conservative U.S. presidential candidate (Dole, 1996). Political liberals (and social scientists) are more likely to blame past and present situations: "If you had to live with the same poor education, lack of opportunity, and discrimination, would we be any better off?" To understand and prevent terrorism, they say, consider the situations that breed terrorists. Better to drain the swamps than swat the mosquitoes.

Managers' attributions also have effects. In evaluating employees, they are likely to attribute poor performance to personal factors, such as low ability or lack of motivation. But remember the actor's viewpoint: Workers doing poorly on a job recognize situational influences, such as inadequate supplies, poor working conditions, difficult co-workers, or impossible demands (Rice, 1985).

**The point to remember:** Our attributions—to individuals' dispositions or to their situations—should be made carefully. They have real consequences.

**attribution theory** the theory that we explain someone's behavior by crediting either the situation or the person's disposition.

**fundamental attribution error** the tendency for observers, when analyzing another's behavior, to underestimate the impact of the situation and to overestimate the impact of personal disposition.



"Otis, shout at that man to pull himself together."

Some 7 in 10 college women report having experienced a man misattributing her friendliness as a sexual come-on (Jacques-Tiura et al., 2007).



**An attribution question** Some people blamed the New Orleans residents for not evacuating before the predicted 2005 Hurricane Katrina. Others attributed their inaction to the situation—to their not having cars or not being offered bus transportation.

## Key Terms continued from p. 643

conflict  
social trap  
mirror-image perceptions  
self-fulfilling prophecy  
superordinate goals  
GRIT

## TEACHING TIP

People will make attributions depending on their level of involvement in a situation. Have students determine what types of attributions the actors and observers made in the following situation:

In 1979, rock fans were waiting to get into a concert by The Who. When the Coliseum doors were opened, several fans were trampled to death. *Time* magazine later received a letter from an outside observer and one from an actor participant. How do their attributions differ?

### • The observer:

"The violently destructive message that The Who and other rock groups deliver leaves me little surprised that they attract a mob that will trample human beings to death to gain better seats. Of greater concern is a respected news magazine's adulation of this sick phenomenon."

### • The actor:

"While standing in the crowd at Riverfront Coliseum, I distinctly remember feeling that I was being punished for being a rock fan. My sister and I joked about this, unaware of the horror happening around us. Later, those jokes came back to us grimly as we watched the news. How many lives will be lost before the punitive and inhuman policy of festival seating at rock concerts is outlawed?"

## INTERCONNECTING



Link the discussion of attributions to stereotypes and prejudice. If people hold strong stereotypes or prejudices toward a particular group of people, they are likely to make a dispositional attribution for their behaviors. These people would explain similar behavior by people in their own groups using situational attributions instead.

## TEACHING TIP

When we are aware of our attitudes, they are more likely to guide our actions. Researchers have made participants more aware by installing mirrors in the laboratory. This is called the “looking glass effect.”

- Edward Diener and Mark Wallbom noted that nearly all college students say that cheating is morally wrong. They had students work on an anagram-solving task that was presumably an IQ test. They told them to stop when a bell sounded. Left alone, 71 percent cheated by working past the bell. For students working in front of a mirror, only 7 percent cheated.
- Brad Bushman found that people who can see their reflections eat less unhealthy food than those who can't see themselves. Bushman and his colleagues asked college students to try full-fat, low-fat, and fat-free cream cheese. Participants in a room with a mirror ate less of the full-fat spread than did those with no mirror.

Diener, E., & Wallbom, M. (1976). Effects of self-awareness on antinormative behavior. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 10, 107–111.

Haugen, P. (1999, May/June). The looking glass effect. *Psychology Today*, p. 24.

• **attitude** feelings, often influenced by our beliefs, that predispose us to respond in a particular way to objects, people, and events.

• **central route persuasion** attitude change path in which interested people focus on the arguments and respond with favorable thoughts.

• **peripheral route persuasion** attitude change path in which people are influenced by incidental cues, such as a speaker's attractiveness.

• **foot-in-the-door phenomenon** the tendency for people who have first agreed to a small request to comply later with a larger request.

• **role** a set of expectations (norms) about a social position, defining how those in the position ought to behave.

► FIGURE 14.1

**Attitudes follow behavior** Cooperative actions, such as those performed by people on sports teams, feed mutual liking. Such attitudes, in turn, promote positive behavior.



## Attitudes and Actions

### 2: Does what we think affect what we do, or does what we do affect what we think?

**Attitudes** are feelings, often influenced by our beliefs, that predispose our reactions to objects, people, and events. If we believe someone is mean, we may feel dislike for the person and act unfriendly.

### Attitudes Affect Actions

Our attitudes often predict our behavior. Al Gore's movie *An Inconvenient Truth* and the Alliance for Climate Protection it has spawned have a simple premise: Public opinion about the reality and dangers of global climate change can change, with effects on both personal behaviors and public policies. Indeed, by the end of 2007, an analysis of international opinion surveys by WorldPublicOpinion.org showed “widespread and growing concern about climate change. Large majorities believe that human activity causes climate change and favor policies designed to reduce emissions.” Thanks to the mass persuasion campaign, many corporations, as well as campuses, are now going green.

This tidal wave of change has occurred as people have engaged scientific evidence and arguments and responded with favorable thoughts. Such **central route persuasion** occurs mostly when people are naturally analytical or involved in the issue. When issues don't engage systematic thinking, persuasion may occur through a faster **peripheral route**, as people respond to incidental cues, such as endorsements by respected people, and make snap judgments. Because central route persuasion is more thoughtful and less superficial, it is more durable and more likely to influence behavior.

Other factors, including the external situation, also influence behavior. Strong social pressures can weaken the attitude-behavior connection (Wallace et al., 2005). For example, the American public's overwhelming support for former President George W. Bush's preparation to attack Iraq motivated Democratic leaders to vote to support Bush's war plan, despite their private reservations (Nagourney, 2002). Nevertheless, attitudes do affect behavior when external influences are minimal, especially when the attitude is stable, specific to the behavior, and easily recalled (Glasman & Albarracín, 2006). One experiment used vivid, easily recalled information to persuade people that sustained tanning put them at risk for future skin cancer. One month later, 72 percent of the participants, and only 16 percent of those in a waiting list control group, had lighter skin (McClendon & Prentice-Dunn, 2001).

### Actions Affect Attitudes

Now consider a more surprising principle: Not only will people sometimes stand up for what they believe, they will also come to believe in the idea they have supported. Many streams of evidence confirm that **attitudes follow behavior** (FIGURE 14.1).

**The Foot-in-the-Door Phenomenon** Inducing people to act against their beliefs can affect their attitude. During the Korean war, many captured U.S. soldiers were imprisoned in war camps run by Chinese communists. Without using brutality, the captors secured the prisoners' collaboration in various activities. Some merely ran errands or accepted favors. Others made radio appeals and false confessions. Still others informed on fellow prisoners and divulged military information. When the war ended, 21 prisoners chose to stay with the communists. More returned home “brainwashed”—convinced that communism was a good thing for Asia.

## TROUBLESHOOTING

Help students remember the different routes to persuasion:

- Central route is more direct, focusing on the heart of the issue being discussed. The issues are the heart (or center) of the matter.
- Peripheral route is more indirect, focusing on things that really may not have any direct connection to the issue at hand. Students can remember what peripheral vision is from Unit 4—our vision of things on the outer edge of the visual field. Celebrity endorsements, a peripheral route to persuasion, are not central to supporting an issue.

ingredient of the Chinese "thought-control" program was its effective use of **foot-in-the-door phenomenon**—a tendency for people who agree to a small act to comply later with a larger one. The Chinese began with harmless requests but then gradually escalated their demands (Schein, 1956). Having "trained" the prisoners to write trivial statements, the communists then asked them to copy or create more important—noting, perhaps, the flaws of capitalism. Then, perhaps to ingratiate themselves, the prisoners participated in group discussions, wrote self-critical statements, or uttered public confessions. After doing so, they often adjusted their beliefs for consistency with their public acts.

The point is simple: To get people to agree to something big, "start small and build," as Robert Cialdini (1993). Knowing this, you can be wary of those who would exploit the tactic. This chicken-and-egg spiral, of actions-feeding-attitudes-feeding-actions, enables behavior to escalate. A trivial act makes the next act easier. Succumb to temptation and you will find the next temptation harder to resist.

Years of experiments have simulated part of the war prisoners' experience by getting people into acting against their attitudes or violating their moral standards. The nearly inevitable result: Doing becomes believing. When people are asked to harm an innocent victim—by making nasty comments or delivering electric shocks—they then begin to disparage their victim. If induced to speak or act on behalf of a position they have qualms about, they begin to believe their words.

Unfortunately, the attitudes-follow-behavior principle works as well for good deeds as bad. The foot-in-the-door tactic has helped boost charitable contributions, donations, and product sales. In one experiment, researchers posing as safe-driving volunteers asked Californians to permit the installation of a large, poorly lettered "Drive Carefully" sign in their front yards. Only 17 percent consented. They then asked other home owners with a small request first: Would they display a small, high "Be a Safe Driver" sign? Nearly all readily agreed. When reapproached a few weeks later to allow the large, ugly sign in their front yards, 76 percent consented (Cialdini, Kallgren, & Fraser, 1966). To secure a big commitment, it often pays to put your foot in the door: Start small and build.

Attitudes likewise follow behavior. In the years immediately following the introduction of school desegregation in the United States and the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, White Americans expressed diminishing racial prejudice. And as Americans in different regions came to act more alike—thanks to uniform national standards against discrimination—they began to think alike. Experiments confirm the observation: Moral action strengthens moral convictions.

**Playing Affects Attitudes** When you adopt a new role—when you leave high school and start high school, become a college student, or begin a new job—you have to follow the social prescriptions. At first, your behaviors may feel phony, as if you are acting a role. The first weeks in the military feel artificial—as if one is pretending to be a soldier. The first weeks of a marriage may feel like "playing house." Before long, however, what began as play-acting in the theater of life becomes you.

Researchers have confirmed this effect by assessing people's attitudes before and after they adopt a new role, sometimes in laboratory situations, sometimes in everyday life, such as before and after taking a job. In one famous laboratory study, male college students volunteered to spend time in a simulated prison devised by Stanford psychologist Philip Zimbardo (1972). Some he randomly designated as guards; he gave them uniforms, billy clubs, and whistles and instructed them to enforce certain rules. The remainder became prisoners; they were locked in barren cells and forced to wear humiliating outfits. After a day or two in which the volunteers self-consciously "played"

"If the King destroys a man, that's proof to the King it must have been a bad man."

Thomas Cromwell, in Robert Bolt's *A Man for All Seasons*, 1960

"Fake it until you make it."

Alcoholics Anonymous saying



### TEACHING TIP

Students can brainstorm about ways they have used foot-in-the-door to get advantages for themselves.

- Have they ever negotiated a later curfew with their parents by asking for a slightly later curfew first instead of an extremely later curfew?
- Have they ever asked their parents to buy them something inexpensive before asking for something expensive? (*If there is a big difference in price, asking for the more expensive item first—and getting compliance—would likely get both items.*)
- Have they ever told their parents about a slightly bad thing before telling about something they'd view as being really bad? (*Sometimes telling about the really bad thing first makes the other mistake seem less problematic.*)



### TEACHING TIP

Help students understand that it is easier to change attitudes than to change actions. Attitudes are internal and might not be seen or known by others. Actions, on the other hand, are out in the open, observed by all. People assume that we act according to our attitudes, not the other way around. So if an action conflicts with an attitude, we will change the attitude to fit the action instead of the other way around.



### RESEARCH

Have students conduct a research study using surveys to test the foot-in-the-door phenomenon.

- Subjects can be asked either to fill out a 100-question survey followed by a 10-question survey or a 10-question survey first followed by a 100-question survey.
- The surveys are actually unimportant. Since most people will reject taking the 100-question survey first, in the group that does the short survey first you need only gain

their compliance to take the 100-question survey; they don't actually need to complete that long survey.

Be sure to obtain Institutional Review Board approval and informed consent before engaging in any research endeavor.

## TEACHING TIP

Other techniques influence actions and attitudes:

- **Low-ball technique.** Students were asked to participate in a laboratory experiment at 7:00 A.M. Only 24 percent came. When students agreed to participate without knowing the time and then were told the early time, 53 percent showed up!
- **Brainwashing.** Used on American POWs during the Korean War, the captors had the prisoners write a series of essays, each representing a more serious attack on the U.S. government. Slowly each writer's attitude tended to change to become consistent with his words.
- **Write-it-down technique.** Once a customer fills out a sales agreement, they commit to the purchase.
- **"Fifty-words-or-less" testimonials.** Why are manufacturers of toothpaste, breakfast cereal, and chewing gum so eager to get people to compose a short personal statement that begins, "Why I like. . ." To get as many people as possible to go on record as favoring the product. Saying is believing!

## TEACHING TIP

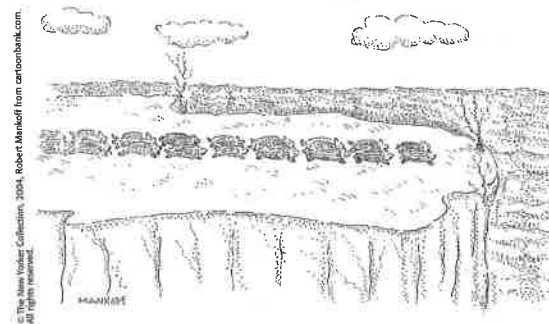
At this time, you may want to use **Lecture/Discussion Topics:** *The Looking Glass Effect* (p. 6) or *The Theory of Reasoned Action* (p. 7) or *Actions Influence Attitudes* (p. 7) or *The Justification of Effort* (p. 8) or *Revisiting the Stanford Prison Experiment* (p. 9) or *Abu Ghraib Prison and Social Psychology* (p. 10) from Bolt's Teacher's Resource Binder.



**The power of the situation** In Philip Zimbardo's Stanford prison simulation, a toxic situation triggered degrading behaviors among those assigned to the guard role.

Regarding President Lyndon Johnson's commitment to the Vietnam war: "A president who justifies his actions only to the public might be induced to change them. A president who has justified his actions to himself, believing that he has the truth, becomes impervious to self-correction."

Carol Tavris and Elliot Aronson, *Mistakes Were Made (But Not by Me)*, 2007



"Look, I have my misgivings, too, but what choice do we have except stay the course?"

their roles, the simulation became real—too real. Most of the guards developed disparaging attitudes, and some devised cruel and degrading routines. One by one, the prisoners broke down, rebelled, or became passively resigned, causing Zimbardo to call off the study after only six days. More recently, similar situations have played themselves out in the real world—as in Iraq at the Abu Ghraib prison (see Close-Up: Abu Ghraib Prison—An "Atrocity-Producing Situation"?).

Greece's military junta during the early 1970s took advantage of the effects of role-playing to train men to become torturers (Staub, 1989). The men's indoctrination into their roles occurred in small steps. First, the trainee stood guard outside the interrogation cells—the "foot in the door." Next, he stood guard inside. Only then was he ready to become actively involved in the questioning and torture. As the nineteenth-century writer Nathaniel Hawthorne noted, "No man, for any considerable period, can wear one face to himself and another to the multitude without finally getting bewildered as to which may be true." What we do, we gradually become.

Psychologists add a cautionary note: In Zimbardo's prison simulation, at Abu Ghraib prison, and in other atrocity-producing situations, some people succumb to the situation and others do not (Carnahan & McFarland, 2007; Haslam & Reicher, 2007; Mastrianni & Reed, 2006; Zimbardo, 2007). Person and situation interact. Water has the power to dissolve some substances, notes John Johnson (2007), but not all. In a watery situation, salt dissolves, sand does not. So also, when put in with rotten apples, some people, but not others, become bad apples.

**Cognitive Dissonance: Relief From Tension** So far we have seen that actions can affect attitudes, sometimes turning prisoners into collaborators, doubters into believers, mere acquaintances into friends, and compliant guards into abusers. But why? One explanation is that when we become aware that our attitudes and actions don't coincide, we experience tension, or *cognitive dissonance*. To relieve this tension, according to the **cognitive dissonance theory** proposed by Leon Festinger, we often bring our attitudes into line with our actions. It is as if we rationalize, "If I chose to do it (or say it), I must believe in it." The less coerced and more responsible we feel for a troubling act, the more dissonance we feel. The more dissonance we feel, the more motivated we are to find consistency, such as changing our attitudes to help justify the act.

The U.S. invasion of Iraq was mainly premised on the presumed threat of Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction (WMD). As the war began, only 38 percent of Americans surveyed said the war was justified even if Iraq did not have WMD (Gallup, 2003). Nearly 80 percent believed such weapons would be found (Duffy, 2003; Newport et al., 2003). When no WMD were found, many Americans felt dissonance, which was heightened by their awareness of the war's financial and human costs, by scenes of chaos in Iraq, and by inflamed anti-American and pro-terrorist sentiments in some parts of the world.

To reduce dissonance, some people revised their memories of the main rationale for going to war, which then became liberating an oppressed people and promoting democracy in the Middle East. Before long, the once-minority opinion became the majority view: 58 percent of Americans said they supported the war even if there were no WMD (Gallup, 2003). "Whether or not they find weapons of mass destruction doesn't matter," explained Republican pollster Frank Luntz (2003), "because the rationale for the war changed." It was not until late 2004, when hopes for a flourishing peace waned, that Americans' support for the war dropped below 50 percent.

## WEB CONNECT

Philip Zimbardo created a simulated prison and randomly assigned college students to play either the role of guard or prisoner. A Web-based slide show at [www.prisonexp.org](http://www.prisonexp.org) provides a detailed account of this fascinating study that demonstrates how role playing can powerfully shape attitudes and even self-identity. Narrated slides show how the guards developed degrading routines and, in only six days, the prisoners broke down, rebelled, or became passively resigned. Students can provide an oral or written report on their visit to this Web site. Helpful discussion questions accompany the slide program and can be printed for classroom use.

## Abu Ghraib Prison—An “Atrocity-Producing Situation”?



Originally published in the New Yorker

**Bad apples or bad barrels?** Like the Stanford Prison Experiment in 1971, the real-life Abu Ghraib prison fiasco in 2004 was a powerfully toxic situation, contends social psychologist Philip Zimbardo.

The first photos emerged in 2004 from Iraq's Abu Ghraib prison, the civilized world was shocked. The photos showed U.S. military guards stripping prisoners naked, placing hoods on them, stacking them in piles, prodding them with electricity, hunting them with attack dogs, and subjecting them to sleep

deprivation, humiliation, and extreme stress. Was the problem, as so many people initially supposed, a few bad apples—a few irresponsible or sadistic guards? That was the U.S. Army's seeming verdict when it court-martialed and imprisoned some of the guards, and then cleared four of the five top commanding officers responsible for Abu Ghraib's policies and operations. The lower-level military guards were “sick bastards,” explained the defense attorney for one of the commanding officers (Tarbert, 2004).

Many social psychologists, however, reminded us that a toxic situation can make even good apples go bad (Fiske et al., 2004). “When ordinary people are put in a novel, evil place, such as most prisons, Situations Win, People Lose,” offered Philip Zimbardo (2004), adding, “That is true for the majority of people in all the relevant social psychological research done over the past 40 years.”

Consider the situation, explained Zimbardo. The guards, some of them model soldier-reservists with no prior criminal or sadistic history, were exhausted from working 12-hour shifts, seven days a week. They were dealing with an enemy, and their prejudices were heightened by fears of lethal attacks and by the violent deaths of many fellow soldiers. They were put in an understaffed guard role, with minimal training and supervision. They were then encouraged to “soften up” for interrogation detainees who had been denied access to the Red Cross. “When you put that set of horrendous work conditions and external factors together, it creates an evil barrel. You could put virtually anybody in it and you're going to get this kind of evil behavior” (Zimbardo, 2005). Atrocious behaviors often emerge in atrocious situations.

Dozens of experiments have explored cognitive dissonance by making people feel responsible for behavior that is inconsistent with their attitudes and that has foreseeable consequences. As a participant in one of these experiments, you might agree for a measly \$2 to help a researcher by writing an essay that supports something you don't believe in (perhaps a school vending machine tax). Feeling responsible for the consequences (which are not consistent with your attitudes), you would probably feel dissonance, especially if you thought an administrator would be reading your essay. How could you reduce the uncomfortable dissonance? One way would be to start being your phony words. Your pretense would become your reality.

The attitudes-follow-behavior principle has a heartening implication: Although we cannot directly control all our feelings, we can influence them by altering our behavior. (Recall from Unit 8B the emotional effects of facial expressions and of body postures.) If we are down in the dumps, we can do as cognitive therapists advise and talk in more positive, self-accepting ways with fewer self-put-downs. If we are unloving, we can become more loving by behaving as if we were so—by saying thoughtful things, expressing affection, giving affirmation. “Assume a virtue if you have it not,” says Hamlet to his mother. “For use can almost change the temper of nature.”

**cognitive dissonance theory** the theory that we act to reduce the discomfort (dissonance) we feel when two of our thoughts (cognitions) are inconsistent. For example, when our awareness of our attitudes and of our actions clash, we can reduce the resulting dissonance by changing our attitudes.



### TEACHING TIP

Engage students in a discussion of college hazing techniques, which are often perpetuated by cognitive dissonance. During fraternity pledging, first year students are run through activities designed to test their limits. One pledge was told to dig his “own grave.” After he complied with orders to lie flat in the finished hole, the sides collapsed and suffocated him before his fraternity brothers could dig him out. Another pledge choked to death after repeatedly trying to swallow a large slab of raw liver soaked in oil. Why do hazing activities persist? As a result of their efforts, new fraternity members may find the group more attractive and worthwhile.



### TEACHING TIP

At this time, you may want to use **Classroom Exercise: Introducing Cognitive Dissonance Theory** (p. 8) from Bolt's Teacher's Resource Binder.

## DEMO



To demonstrate the “low-ball” technique, you will need the help of a confederate.

- Offer a “free day” in exchange for an after-school study hall. You will negotiate with the principal, but they must make an offer first. Suggest 30 minutes. Send a confederate to the office with the offer. The student will come back with the principal's “counteroffer”: they must spend 2 hours after school. Send back another offer of an hour and a half. This time, the principal “agrees.”
- Will students take the new offer? Probably. Discuss how this “low-ball” technique works off of foot-in-the-door and cognitive dissonance.

## CRITICAL THINKING

Conformity is a controversial issue among teens who want to fit in, but who also each want to be a distinct person at the same time. Have students discuss conformity in your school:

- Are the majority of students conformists or nonconformists? Why?
- Is there pressure among students at your school to dress a certain way or like certain types of music? Why or why not?
- Was there more pressure to conform in middle school as compared to high school? Why or why not?
- Where is the line between conformity and nonconformity? Is a group of nonconformists conforming to each other or nonconforming against society?



## TEACHING TIP

At this time, you may want to use **Lecture/Discussion Topics:** *Mimicry and Prosocial Behavior* (p. 10) or *Social Exclusion and Mimicry* (p. 11) or *The Seattle Windshield Pitting Epidemic* (p. 11) or *Obedience in Everyday Life* (p. 14) from Bolt's Teacher's Resource Binder.

"Sit all day in a moping posture, sigh, and reply to everything with a dismal voice, and your melancholy lingers. . . . If we wish to conquer undesirable emotional tendencies in ourselves, we must . . . go through the outward movements of those contrary dispositions which we prefer to cultivate."

William James, *Principles of Psychology*, 1890

*The point to remember: Cruel acts shape the self. But so do acts of good will. Act as though you like someone, and you soon will. Changing our behavior can change how we think about others and how we feel about ourselves.*

## BEFORE YOU MOVE ON . . .

### ASK YOURSELF

Do you have an attitude or tendency you would like to change? Using the attitudes-follow-behavior principle, how might you go about changing that attitude?

### TEST YOURSELF 1

Driving to school one snowy day, Marco narrowly misses a car that slides through a red light. "Slow down! What a terrible driver," he thinks to himself. Moments later, Marco himself slips through an intersection and yelps, "Wow! These roads are awful. The city plows need to get out here." What social psychology principle has Marco just demonstrated? Explain.

Answers to the Test Yourself questions can be found in Appendix E at the end of the book.

## Social Influence

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY'S GREAT LESSON is the enormous power of social influence. This influence can be seen in our conformity, our compliance, and our group behavior. Suicides, bomb threats, airplane hijackings, and UFO sightings all have a curious tendency to come in clusters. On most high school campuses, jeans are the dress code; on New York's Wall Street or London's Bond Street, dress suits are the norm. When we know how to act, how to groom, how to talk, life functions smoothly. Armed with social influence principles, advertisers, fund raisers, and campaign workers aim to sway our decisions to buy, to donate, to vote. Isolated with others who share their grievances, dissenters may gradually become rebels, and rebels may become terrorists. Let's examine the pull of these social strings. How strong are they? How do they operate?

## Conformity and Obedience

3: What do experiments on conformity and compliance reveal about the power of social influence?

**Niche conformity** Are these students asserting their individuality or identifying themselves with others of the same microculture?



Behavior is contagious. Consider:

- A cluster of people stand gazing upward, and passersby pause to do likewise.
- Baristas and street musicians know to "seed" their tip containers with money to suggest that others have given.
- One person laughs, coughs, or yawns, and others in the group soon do the same. **Chimpanzees, too**, are more likely to yawn after observing another chimpanzee yawn (Anderson et al., 2004).
- "Sickness" can also be psychologically contagious. In the anxious 9/11 aftermath, more than two dozen elementary and middle schools had outbreaks of children reporting red rashes, sometimes causing parents to wonder whether biological terrorism was at work (Talbot, 2002). Some cases may have been

## DEMO

If students feel conformity is not really an issue with them, ask them a question in which you will get a totally positive or negative response. How many students raise their hands? Who told them to raise their hands? While this activity demonstrates the power of conditioning, it also shows how students conform to the behavior the school demands from them—like raising hands in response to teacher requests.

Adapted from Stork, E. (1992). Operant conditioning: Role in human behavior. In Sullivan, M., Blair-Broeker, C., Lindenberg, T., & Carlisle, A., (Eds.) (1992) *Learning*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

stress-related, but mostly, health experts concluded, people were just noticing normal early acne, insect bites, eczema, and dry skin from overheated classrooms.

We are natural mimics—an effect Tanya Chartrand and John Bargh (1999) have called the *chameleon effect*. Unconsciously mimicking others' expressions, postures, and voice tones helps us feel what they are feeling. This helps explain why we feel happier around happy people than around depressed ones, and why studies of groups of British nurses and accountants reveal *mood linkage*—sharing up and down moods (Otterdell et al., 1998). Just hearing someone reading a neutral text in either a happy- or sad-sounding voice creates "mood contagion" in listeners (Neumann & Mack, 2000).

Chartrand and Bargh demonstrated the chameleon effect when they had students work in a room alongside a confederate working for the experimenter. Sometimes the confederates rubbed their face; on other occasions, they shook their foot. Sure enough, participants tended to rub their own face when with the face-rubbing person and shake their own foot when with the foot-shaking person. Such automatic mimicry is part of empathy. Empathic people yawn more after seeing others yawn (Morrison, 2007). And empathic, mimicking people are liked more. Those most eager to fit in with a group seem intuitively to know this, for they are especially prone to unconscious mimicry (Lakin & Chartrand, 2003).

ON SEQUITUR

BANKING ON  
the YOUTH  
MARKET...

by WILEY



Sometimes the effects of suggestibility are more serious. In the eight days following the 1999 shooting rampage at Colorado's Columbine High School, every U.S. state except Vermont experienced threats of copycat violence. Pennsylvania alone recorded such threats (Cooper, 1999). Sociologist David Phillips and his colleagues (1985, 1989) found that suicides, too, sometimes increase following a highly publicized suicide. In the wake of screen idol Marilyn Monroe's suicide on August 6, 1962, for example, the number of suicides in the United States exceeded the usual August count of 200. Within a one-year period, one London psychiatric unit experienced 14 patient suicides (Joiner, 1999). In the days after Saddam Hussein's widely publicized execution in Iraq, there were cases of boys in Turkey, Pakistan, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, and the United States who hung themselves, apparently accidentally, after slipping hoses around their own heads (AP, 2007).

What causes suicide clusters? Do people act similarly because of their influence on one another? Or because they are simultaneously exposed to the same events and conditions? Seeking answers, social psychologists have conducted experiments on group pressure and conformity.

### Group Pressure and Conformity

Suggestibility is a subtle type of **conformity**—adjusting our behavior or thinking to match some group standard. To study conformity, Solomon Asch (1955) devised a

**conformity** adjusting one's behavior or thinking to coincide with a group standard.

### INTERCONNECTING



Point out that even though *chameleon effect* is not a bold vocabulary word, it is important to remember. Connect this concept to mirror neurons, discussed in Unit 6.



### TEACHING TIP

Copycat crimes are a concern for law enforcement personnel. Contact a local police station to ask about how they try to limit the possibility of copycat crimes:

- Do they limit the amount of press coverage of particular crimes? Why or why not? If so, how?
- If a criminal is still at large, how can they tell if a crime is a copycat crime or one that is committed by the original perpetrator?
- What can schools learn from the police about limiting copycat crimes or copycat suicides?



### TEACHING TIP

At this time, you may want to use **Classroom Exercises: Suggestibility** (p. 12) or **Social Influence** (p. 12) or **Obedience and Conformity** (p. 13) or **Would You Obey?** (p. 14) or **Wolves or Sheep?** (p. 15) or **Classroom Exercise/Student Project: Applying Research on Conformity, Obedience, and Role-Playing** (p. 15) from Bolt's Teacher's Resource Binder.

### DEMO



Begin to yawn in class. Count how many students also yawn. Try these other activities:

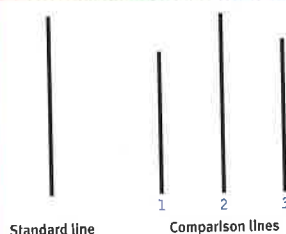
- Stand outside school and look up. Have an observer count how many people join.
- Go to a public place and start yawning. Have an observer count the number of people who yawn.
- Set up a booth to give away a pamphlet or some ball-point pens. See how many people stop by in a certain time period. Then have confederates stand around the booth, asking questions and taking the free stuff. In a similar time period, count how many other people stop by.

## TEACHING TIP

Have students notice that the correct answer among the comparison lines is quite obvious. There should have been no question as to which line to choose, but the power of conformity to the group lead normally confident people to choose the wrong answer instead of the right one.

## TEACHING TIP

Suggest to students an ethical issue, such as participating in cheating or bullying another student, where they would need to stand against a crowd in order to do the right thing. Would they vote their conscience or go with the crowd? Discuss with students what personal qualities and situations would lead a person to be more likely to vote his or her conscience.



► FIGURE 14.2

**Asch's conformity experiments** Which of the three comparison lines is equal to the standard line? What do you suppose most people would say after hearing five others say, "Line 3"? In this photo from one of Asch's experiments, the student in the center shows the severe discomfort that comes from disagreeing with the responses of other group members (in this case, confederates of the experimenter).



simple test. As a participant in what you believe is a study of visual perception, you arrive at the experiment location in time to take a seat at a table where five people are already seated. The experimenter asks which of three comparison lines is identical to a standard line (FIGURE 14.2). You see clearly that the answer is Line 2 and await your turn to say so after the others. Your boredom with this experiment begins to show when the next set of lines proves equally easy.

Now comes the third trial, and the correct answer seems just as clear-cut, but the first person gives what strikes you as a wrong answer: "Line 3." When the second person and then the third and fourth give the same wrong answer, you sit up straight and squint. When the fifth person agrees with the first four, you feel your heart begin to pound. The experimenter then looks to you for your answer. Torn between the unanimity of your five fellow respondents and the evidence of your own eyes, you feel tense and much less sure of yourself than you were moments ago. You hesitate before answering, wondering whether you should suffer the discomfort of being the oddball. What answer do you give?

In the experiments conducted by Asch and others after him, thousands of college students have experienced this conflict. Answering such questions alone, they erred less than 1 percent of the time. But the odds were quite different when several others—confederates working for the experimenter—answered incorrectly. Although most people told the truth even when others did not, Asch nevertheless was disturbed by his result: More than one-third of the time, these "intelligent and well-meaning" college-student participants were then "willing to call white black" by going along with the group.

**Conditions That Strengthen Conformity** Asch's procedure became the model for later investigations. Although experiments have not always found so much conformity, they do reveal that conformity increases when

- one is made to feel incompetent or insecure.
- the group has at least three people.
- the group is unanimous. (The dissent of just one other person greatly increases social courage.)
- one admires the group's status and attractiveness.
- one has made no prior commitment to any response.
- others in the group observe one's behavior.
- one's culture strongly encourages respect for social standards.

Thus, we might predict the behavior of Austin, an enthusiastic but insecure new student government member: Noting that the 10 other members appear unanimous in their plans for a fund raiser, Austin is unlikely to voice his dissent.

*Look at*  
"Have you ever noticed how one example—good or bad—can prompt others to follow? How one illegally parked car can give permission for others to do likewise? How one racial joke can fuel another?"

Marian Wright Edelman, *The Measure of Our Success*, 1992

**normative social influence** influence resulting from a person's desire to gain approval or avoid disapproval.

**informational social influence** influence resulting from one's willingness to accept others' opinions about reality.

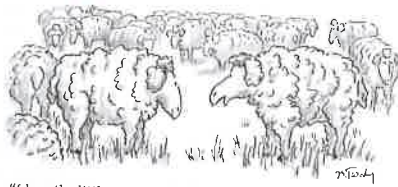
## CULTURAL CONNECTIONS

Have students examine which cultures are more likely to encourage conformity.

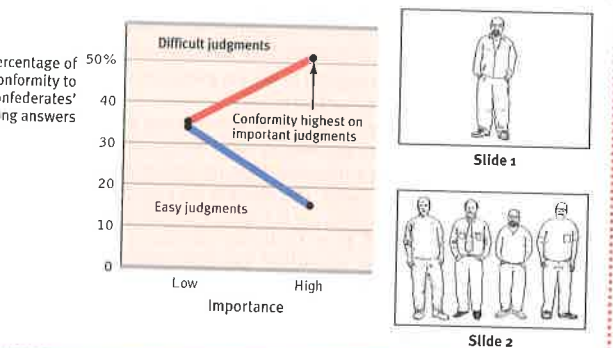
- What are the qualities of cultures that encourage conformity?
- What types of government do these cultures have? Are they all communistic, democratic, or a mixture of both?
- On whom do these cultures encourage conformity—government officials, families, adults, or all of the above?
- How do these cultures handle people who don't conform? Do they suffer formalized punishment (jail, fines, etc.) or more informal social punishment (shunning, lack of job advancement, etc.)?

**Reasons for Conforming** Fish swim in schools. Birds fly in flocks. And humans, too, tend to go with their group, to think what it thinks and do what it does. Researchers have seen this in college residence halls, where over time students' attitudes become more similar to those living near them (Cullum & Olson, 2007). But why? Why do we clap when others clap, eat as others eat, or see what others believe, even see what others see? Frequently, it is to avoid rejection or to gain social approval. In such cases, we are responding to what psychologists call **normative social influence**. We are sensitive to social norms—understood rules for accepted and expected behavior—because the price we pay for being different may be severe.

Conforming to norms is not the only reason we conform: Groups may provide valuable information, and only an uncommonly stubborn person will never listen to others. When we accept others' opinions about reality, we are responding to **informational social influence**. "Those who never retract their opinions love themselves more than they love truth," observed the eighteenth-century French essayist Jean-Jacques Rousseau. As Rebecca Denton demonstrated in 2004, sometimes it pays to assume others are right and to follow their lead. Denton set a record for the furthest distance driven on the wrong side of a British divided highway—30 miles, with only one minor sideswipe, before the motorway ran out and police were able to puncture her tires. Denton later explained that she thought the hundreds of other drivers coming her way were all on the wrong side of the road (Woolcock, 2004). Asch and his colleagues (1951) cleverly demonstrated our openness to informational influence on tough, important judgments. They modernized the Asch experiment by showing University of Iowa students a slide of a stimulus person, followed by a slide of a four-person lineup (FIGURE 14.3). Their experiment made the task either easy (viewing the lineup for five seconds) or difficult (viewing the lineup for but half a second). It also led them to think their judgments were either unimportant (just a preliminary test of some eyewitness identification procedures) or important (establishing norms for an actual police procedure, with a \$20 award to the most accurate participants). When the accuracy of their judgments seemed important, people rarely conformed when the task was easy, but they conformed half the time when the task was difficult. If we are not sure of what is right, and if being right matters, we are receptive to others' opinions. Our view of social influence as bad or good depends on our values. When influence supports what we approve, we applaud those who are "open-minded" and "sensitive" and are to be "responsive." When influence supports what we disapprove, we scorn the



"I love the little ways you're identical to everyone else."



► FIGURE 14.3

**Informational influence** Sample task: After seeing Slides 1 and 2, participants judged which person in Slide 2 was the same as the person in Slide 1. (From Baron et al., 1996.)

## DEMO

Stanley Milgram asked his students to violate a social norm, such as asking another passenger for his or her seat on a city bus or subway. One graduate student reported: "I just couldn't go on. It was one of the most difficult things I ever did in my life." Unconvinced, Milgram tried it himself. He approached a seated passenger but the words "seemed lodged in my trachea and would simply not emerge. I stood there frozen, then retreated, the mission unfulfilled." He finally choked out the request: "Excuse me, sir, may I have your seat?" To Milgram's surprise, the man gave up his seat! In taking the man's seat, Milgram observed, "I was overwhelmed by the need to behave in a way that would justify my request. My head sank between my knees . . . I actually felt as if I were going to perish." Not until he left the train did his tension dissipate. This experiment demonstrated several social principles:

- Enormous inhibitory anxiety ordinarily prevents us from breaking social norms.
- We have a powerful need to justify our actions after violating a norm.
- The power of immediate circumstances on our feelings and behavior is immense.

## TEACHING TIP

Most people will yield to the majority opinion even when it conflicts with their own. When asked how we would respond in the Asch situation, we predict we would resist group pressure. We underestimate the power of social forces. Students can imagine themselves violating some less-than-earthshaking norms: standing in the middle of a class, greeting some distinguished city officials by their first names, munching popcorn at a piano recital, wearing shorts to a place of worship.

How would they feel in these situations?

What consequences would they endure for violating these norms? Is that why they conform?



## TEACHING TIP

Stanley Milgram did his research during a time when people were dealing with the consequences of the Holocaust and watching the Nuremberg trials. People believed the German people were evil for being complicit in the Holocaust, and Milgram, himself a Jew, wanted to demonstrate the power of social situations on people's behavior. Have students research this particularly painful time in history:

- What techniques did Hitler and his propaganda officers use to convince the German people to comply with the Holocaust?
- Highlight some examples of German citizens who tried to save Jews from the genocide. Why were these people able to disobey?

Courtesy of CUNY Graduate School and University Center



**Stanley Milgram (1933–1984)** This social psychologist's obedience experiments "belong to the self-understanding of literate people in our age" (Sabini, 1986).

"submissive conformity" of those who comply with others' wishes. As we saw in Unit 10, cultures vary in the extent to which they value individualism or collectivism. Western Europeans and people in most English-speaking countries tend to prize individualism more than conformity and obedience. These values are reflected in social influence experiments that have been conducted in 17 countries: In individualist cultures, conformity rates are lower (Bond & Smith, 1996). In the individualistic United States, university students tend to see themselves, in domains ranging from consumer purchases to political views, as less conforming than others (Pronin et al., 2007). We are, in our own eyes, individuals amid a crowd of sheep. Thus, tattoos, once a symbol of nonconformity, may lose their appeal if they become too popular.

## Obedience

Social psychologist Stanley Milgram (1963, 1974), a student of Solomon Asch, knew that people often comply with social pressures. But how would they respond to outright commands? To find out, he undertook what have become social psychology's most famous and controversial experiments. Imagine yourself as one of the nearly 1000 participants in Milgram's 20 experiments.

Responding to an advertisement, you come to Yale University's psychology department to participate in an experiment. Professor Milgram's assistant explains that the study concerns the effect of punishment on learning. You and another person draw slips from a hat to see who will be the "teacher" (which your slip says) and who will be the "learner." The learner is then led to an adjoining room and strapped into a chair that is wired through the wall to an electric shock machine. You sit in front of the machine, which has switches labeled with voltages. Your task: to teach and then test the learner on a list of word pairs. You are to punish the learner for wrong answers by delivering brief electric shocks, beginning with a switch labeled "15 Volts—Slight Shock." After each of the learner's errors, you are to move up to the next higher voltage. With each flick of a switch, lights flash, relay switches click on, and an electric buzzing fills the air.

Complying with the experimenter's instructions, you hear the learner grunt when you flick the third, fourth, and fifth switches. After you activate the eighth switch (labeled "120 Volts—Moderate Shock"), the learner shouts that the shocks are painful. After the tenth switch ("150 Volts—Strong Shock"), he cries, "Get me out of here! I won't be in the experiment anymore! I refuse to go on!" Hearing these pleas, you draw back. But the experimenter prods you: "Please continue—the experiment requires that you continue." If you still resist, he insists, "It is absolutely essential that you continue," or "You have no other choice, you must go on."

Obedying, you hear the learner's protests escalate to shrieks of agony as you continue to raise the shock level with each succeeding error. After the 330-volt level, the learner refuses to answer and falls silent. Still, the experimenter pushes you toward the final, 450-volt switch, ordering you to ask the questions and, if no correct answer is given, to administer the next shock level.

How far do you think you would follow the experimenter's commands? In a survey Milgram conducted before the experiment, most people declared they would stop playing such a sadistic-seeming role soon after the learner first indicated pain and certainly before he shrieked in agony. This also was the prediction made by each of 40 psychiatrists Milgram asked to guess the outcome. When Milgram actually conducted the experiment with men aged 20 to 50, he was astonished to find that 63 percent complied fully—right up to the last switch. Ten later studies that included women found women's compliance rates were similar to men's (Blass, 1999).

Did the teachers figure out the hoax—that no shock was being delivered? Did they correctly guess the learner was a confederate who only pretended to feel the shocks? Did they realize the experiment was really testing their willingness to comply with commands to inflict punishment? No. The teachers typically displayed genuine distress:



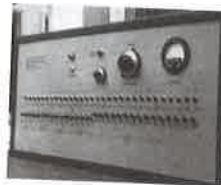
## TEACHING TIP

At this time, you may want to use **Student Project: Violating a Social Norm** (p. 13) from Bolt's Teacher's Resource Binder.

perspired, trembled, laughed nervously, and bit their lips. In a recent virtual re-creation of these experiments, participants responded much as did Milgram's participants, including perspiration and racing heart, when shocking a virtual woman on a screen in front of them (Slater et al., 2006).

Milgram's use of deception and stress triggered a debate over his research ethics. In his own defense, Milgram pointed out that, after the participants learned of the deception and actual research purposes, virtually none regretted taking part (though many by then the participants had reduced their dissonance). When 40 of the teachers who had agonized most were later interviewed by a psychiatrist, none appeared to be suffering emotional aftereffects. All in all, said Milgram, the experiment provoked less enduring stress than university students experience when taking and failing big exams (Blass, 1996).

Wondering whether the participants obeyed because the learners' protests were convincing, Milgram repeated the experiment with 40 new teachers. This time the confederate mentioned a "slight heart condition" while being strapped into the chair, and then he complained and screamed more intensely as the shocks became punishing. Still, 65 percent of the new teachers complied fully (FIGURE 14.4).



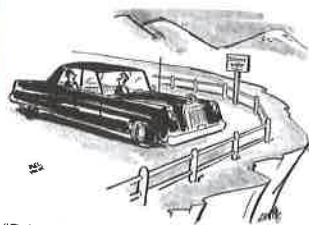
© 1968 by Stanley Milgram, from the film *Obedience*, dist. by Penn State Media Sales

In later experiments, Milgram discovered that subtle details of a situation powerfully influence people. When he varied the social conditions, the proportion of fully obedient participants varied from 0 to 93 percent. Obedience was highest when

the person giving the orders was close at hand and was perceived to be a legitimate authority figure. (Such was the case in 2005 when Temple University's baseball coach sent a 250-pound bench player, Nehemiah Ingram, into a game with instructions to commit "hard fouls." Following orders, Ingram fouled out in minutes after breaking an opposing player's right arm.)

Obedience was lower when Milgram dissociated his experiments from Yale University. The victim was depersonalized or at a distance, even in another room. (Similarly, in combat with an enemy they can see, many soldiers either do not fire their rifles or do not aim them properly. Such refusals to kill are rare among those who are more distant artillery or aircraft weapons [Padgett, 1989].)

There were no role models for defiance; that is, no other participants were seen disobeying the experimenter.



"Drive off the cliff, James, I want to commit suicide."

Drawing by Neil York

► FIGURE 14.4

**Milgram's follow-up obedience experiment** In a repeat of the earlier experiment, 65 percent of the adult male "teachers" fully obeyed the experimenter's commands to continue. They did so despite the "learner's" earlier mention of a heart condition and despite hearing cries of protest after 150 volts and agonized protests after 330 volts. (Data from Milgram, 1974.)



### TEACHING TIP

Subjects in Milgram's studies were actually sheep, not wolves. Milgram designed an alternative experiment in which the "teacher" could select any shock levels on the generator without any coercion. Describe this procedure, asking students to make the following predictions:

- On the average, what shock level do you think the teacher chose for the learner?
- What percentage of teachers do you think set the shock at the highest setting of 450 volts?

Milgram reports that only one subject pressed the maximum shock, and in general the shock level remained in the 45-to-60-volt range. Students typically overestimate the level of shock subjects would choose, thinking they are wolves, not sheep.

Safer, M. (1980). Attributing evil to the subject, not the situation. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 6, 205-209.

### INTERCONNECTING



Discuss with students the ethical issues that arise out of experiments like Stanley Milgram's obedience study:

- Does the APA Ethics Code allow for deception? Why or why not?
- Would this study be approved by an Institutional Review Board today? Why or why not?
- What responsibilities do researchers have for the well-being of participants?

For more information on the APA Ethics Code, see the document online at [www.apa.org/ethics](http://www.apa.org/ethics).

### TEACHING TIP

At this time, you may want to use **Lecture/Discussion Topics: Deviance in the Dark** (p. 6) or **Understanding Terrorism** (p. 17) from Bolt's Teacher's Resource Binder.

## TEACHING TIP

We can learn from the minority of Milgram's participants who confronted authority. Gretchen Brandt, a young medical technician, provides one fascinating example to present in class. She emigrated from Germany 5 years before the studies. Speaking with a thick German accent, she coolly turned to the experimenter at different points and inquired, "Shall I continue?" At the delivery of 210 volts she announced firmly, "Well, I'm sorry, I don't think we should continue." In spite of the experimenter's prompts, she refused to go further and the study ended. Gretchen never appeared tense or nervous. She simply stated that she "did not want to be responsible for any harm to the learner." Milgram notes that her straightforward, courteous demeanor seemed to make disobedience a simple and rational deed. What made her different? Gretchen grew to adolescence in Nazi Germany and, for the greater part of her youth, was exposed to Hitler's propaganda. When asked about the influence of her background, she simply remarked, "Perhaps we have seen too much pain."

Milgram, S. (1974). *Obedience to authority*. New York: Harper & Row.



**Standing up for democracy** Some individuals—roughly one in three in Milgram's experiments—resist social coercion, as did this unarmed man in Beijing, by single-handedly challenging an advancing line of tanks the day after the 1989 Tiananmen Square student uprising was suppressed.

"I was only following orders,"

Adolf Eichmann, Director of Nazi deportation of Jews to concentration camps

The power of legitimate, close-at-hand authorities is dramatically apparent in stories of those who complied with orders to carry out the Holocaust atrocities, and those who didn't. Obedience alone does not explain the Holocaust; anti-Semitic ideology produced eager killers as well (Mastrianni, 2002). But obedience was a factor. In the summer of 1942, nearly 500 middle-aged German reserve police officers were dispatched to German-occupied Jozefow, Poland. On July 13, the group's visibly upset commander informed his recruits, mostly family men, that they had been ordered to round up the village's Jews, who were said to be aiding the enemy. Able-bodied men were to be sent to work camps, and all the rest were to be shot on the spot. Given a chance to refuse participation in the executions, only about a dozen immediately did so. Within 17 hours, the remaining 485 officers killed 1500 helpless women, children, and elderly by shooting

them in the back of the head as they lay face down. Hearing the pleas of the victims, and seeing the gruesome results, some 20 percent of the officers did eventually dissent, managing either to miss their victims or to wander away and hide until the slaughter was over (Browning, 1992). But in real life, as in Milgram's experiments, the disobedient were the minority.

Another story was being played out in the French village of Le Chambon, where French Jews destined for deportation to Germany were being sheltered by villagers who openly defied orders to cooperate with the "New Order." The villagers' ancestors had themselves been persecuted and their pastors had been teaching them to "resist whenever our adversaries will demand of us obedience contrary to the orders of the Gospel" (Rochat, 1993). Ordered by police to give a list of sheltered Jews, the head pastor modeled defiance: "I don't know of Jews, I only know of human beings." Without realizing how long and terrible the war would be, or how much punishment and poverty they would suffer, the resisters made an initial commitment to resist. Supported by their beliefs, their role models, their interactions with one another, and their own initial acts, they remained defiant to the war's end.

## Lessons From the Conformity and Obedience Studies

What do the Asch and Milgram experiments teach us about ourselves? How does judging the length of a line or flicking a shock switch relate to everyday social behavior? Recall from Unit 2 that psychological experiments aim not to re-create the literal behaviors of everyday life but to capture and explore the underlying processes that shape those behaviors. Asch and Milgram devised experiments in which the participants had to choose between adhering to their own standards and being responsive to others, a dilemma we all face frequently.

In Milgram's experiments, participants were also torn between what they should respond to—the pleas of the victim or the orders of the experimenter. Their moral sense warned them not to harm another, yet it also prompted them to obey the experimenter and to be a good research participant. With kindness and obedience on a collision course, obedience usually won.

Such experiments demonstrate that strong social influences can make people conform to falsehoods or capitulate to cruelty. "The most fundamental lesson of our study," Milgram noted, is that "ordinary people, simply doing their jobs, and without any particular hostility on their part, can become agents in a terrible destructive process" (1974, p. 6). Milgram did not entrap his teachers by asking them first to zap learners with enough electricity to make their hair stand on end. Rather, he exploited the foot-in-the-door effect, beginning with a little tickle of electricity and escalating step by step. In the minds of those throwing the switches, the small action became

## RESEARCH

Most colleges and universities have banned hazing for fraternities, sororities, and clubs on campus. Why does it still persist? Have students contact university student relations departments, fraternity and sorority members, and alumni of these organizations to discuss hazing practices past and present:

- What are current university policies regarding hazing? What sanctions will be enacted for organizations that haze?
- How did the university view hazing in the past?

- How do the fraternities' and sororities' national organizations view hazing?
- Did alumni endure hazing? How did they view it then? Would they condone their children enduring hazing?

tified, making the next act tolerable. In Jozefow, in Le Chambon, and in Milgram's experiments, those who resisted usually did so early. After the first acts of compliance, resistance, attitudes began to follow and justify behavior.

So it happens when people succumb, gradually, to evil. In any society, great evils sometimes grow out of people's compliance with lesser evils. The Nazi leaders suspected that most German civil servants would resist shooting or gassing Jews directly, they found them surprisingly willing to handle the paperwork of the Holocaust (Follett & Geller, 1978). Likewise, when Milgram asked 40 men to administer the shocking test while someone else did the shocking, 93 percent complied. Contrary to the image of devilish villains, cruelty does not require monstrous characters; all it takes is ordinary people corrupted by an evil situation—ordinary soldiers who follow orders to torture prisoners, ordinary students who follow orders to haze initiates into their group, ordinary employees who follow orders to produce and market harmful products. Before leading the 9/11 attacks, Mohammed Atta reportedly was a sane, rational person who had been a "good boy" and an excellent student from a close-knit family—not someone who fits our image of a barbaric monster.

## Group Influence

How do groups affect our behavior? To find out, social psychologists study the various influences that operate in the simplest of groups—one person in the presence of another—and those that operate in more complex groups, such as families, teams, and committees.

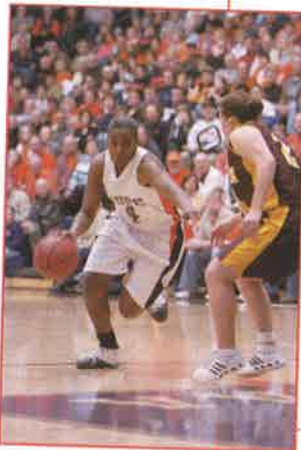
### Individual Behavior in the Presence of Others

How is our behavior affected by the presence of others or by being part of a group?

Appropriately, social psychology's first experiments focused on the simplest of all questions about social behavior: How are we influenced by people watching us or being with us in various activities?

**Social Facilitation** Having noticed that cyclists' races were faster when they competed against each other than when they competed with a clock, Norman Triplett (1898) hypothesized that the presence of others improves performance. To test his hypothesis, Triplett had children wind a fishing reel as rapidly as possible. He found that they wound the reel faster in the presence of someone doing the same thing. This phenomenon of improved performance in others' presence is called **social facilitation**. For example, after a light turns green, drivers take about 15 percent less time to travel the first 100 feet when another car is beside them at the intersection than when they are alone (Towler, 1986).

On tougher tasks (learning nonsense syllables or solving complex multiplication problems), people perform less well when observers or others working on the task are present. Further studies revealed why the presence of others sometimes helps and sometimes hinders performance (Guerin, 1986; Zajonc, 1965). When



Courtesy: Hope College Public Relations

**Social facilitation** Skilled athletes often find they are "on" before an audience. What they do well, they do even better when people are watching.

**Social facilitation** stronger responses on simple or well-learned tasks in the presence of others.

"The normal reaction to an abnormal situation is abnormal behavior."

James Waller, *Becoming Evil: How Ordinary People Commit Genocide and Mass Killing*, 2007

## INTERCONNECTING



Relate social facilitation with test anxiety. While some people feel distinct anxiety any time they take a test, most people only feel anxiety if they are not prepared for an assessment. Edward Thorndike proposed the "Law of Readiness," which states in part that if a person is not ready for a performance, he or she will feel frustrated and will actively seek to avoid the performance. If the person is ready, then he or she will be willing and ready to perform.

## CRITICAL THINKING



If performance on tasks diminishes when we are not good at that task, consider the following scenarios:

- Should students schedule when they take tests so that they can take them when they are ready? Why or why not?
- Should students be allowed to give oral presentations in front of the teacher if they believe their project isn't very good or if they are uncomfortable with their public speaking ability? Why or why not?



## TEACHING TIP

At this time, you may want to use **Lecture/Discussion Topic: Groupthink** (p. 17) or **Classroom Exercises: Deindividuation** (p. 16) or **Group Polarization** (p. 16) or **The Wisdom of Crowds** (p. 18) from Bolt's Teacher's Resource Binder.

## INTERCONNECTING



The Yerkes-Dodson Law also addresses how arousal impacts performance (Figure 8B.3, page 370). This law states that there needs to be an optimal level of arousal present if we want to perform our best. Too little arousal means performance is half-hearted. Too much arousal leads performance to be sloppy.